

Every house holds a secret.

Through the Mirror Door

SARAH
BAKER

NOTES FOR KS2 TEACHERS

 @bysarahbaker

bysarahbaker.com

 @bysarahbaker

INTRODUCTION



Sarah Baker has worked extensively in film, with roles at Aardman Features and the Bermuda Film Festival, and as Story Editor at Celador Films. She has also been a writer and blogger for vintage fashion magazines. Sarah currently lives in South Gloucestershire with her son. Her first book, *THROUGH THE MIRROR DOOR*, is a time-slip ghost story for ages 9+ with a historical twist. Her second novel, *ELOISE UNDERCOVER*, is a thrilling middle-grade adventure set during WW2. Both books are perfect for fans of Emma Carroll, Katherine Rundell and Robin Stevens.

The reading questions and activities suggested here are an introduction to the themes and ideas within the book, giving suggestions to enjoy it across different subjects and to generate a love of reading in the classroom – from creating your own characters to storyboarding, writing dialogue to improv games for the whole class.

ABOUT *THROUGH THE MIRROR DOOR*



“Wait!” I shouted, “there’s someone up there,” but when I looked back at the top of the house there was no light, there was no fire and there was definitely no face.

Life hasn’t been great for Angela since tragedy took her family away. But Angela is given once last chance when she is invited on holiday with her Aunt Cece and her bratty cousins Kitty and Fliss.

Angela tries to behave herself, but she knows secrets lie in the walls of their crumbling French holiday home. Soon night time foot steps, flickering candlelight and shadows in windows lead Angela to Julien - a boy who needs her help. But is it too late? Through saving Julien can Angela save herself?

An enchanting timeslip mystery that will capture your heart and keep you guessing to the last page.

BEFORE READING: INTRODUCING *THROUGH THE MIRROR DOOR*

Display the book cover picture and annotate this based on the children's contributions.



Question prompts:

- What is the cover telling you? What isn't it telling you?
- In just one sentence, suggest what you think the book might be about.

• Who is the author and what is the title of the story?
Based on the title and cover picture, where do you think the mirror might be?

- Look at the caption at the top of the picture. What clues does this give us about the type of story?
- Where do you think the book is set? Think of three interesting adjectives to describe the setting.

- How many characters can you see on the cover? Take a guess at their relationship and give your reasons.

Now display the blurb on the back of the book. Ask the pupils:



- What is the purpose of the blurb?
- Why is the top section written in italics?
- What does the blurb tell you about the book?

Activity

Work in pairs and think about the cover and blurb together. Think of three questions you would like to ask to find out more about the story. Use these questions to

create a display and encourage pupils to write up answers when they reach the relevant part of the story.

Pupils could also produce a piece of artwork based on the cover illustration. Look particularly at the way a sense of mystery is created and the way the picture is built up with layers.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

‘Through the Mirror Door’ would link well with a wide range of topics. Two particular suggestions for further study are:

1. France in the present day and in 1898

French Food

The author says ‘I use food in my books to enrich the sense of place and character. Research French food in 1898. What sounds delicious and what sounds strange? What would you eat/not eat?’

Plan and design a menu for Julien and Angela. Illustrate your favourite dishes.



French culture

Pupils could also collect the French words and phrases used in the book.

2. The outbreak of Typhoid Fever in 1898

These are genuine posters warning the general public about typhoid. Imagine it is 1898. Draw a poster highlighting the dangers of typhoid and what cures are available. Include information on symptoms and illustrate with drawings.

If children have studied the plague or have knowledge of the history of smallpox they could make comparisons with these diseases.



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TYPHOID FEVER IS HERE

Here are a few facts about it:

1. Typhoid comes in early spring. Big rains wash waste matter into wells or into sewers. Many sewers empty into the lake. We drink the lake water.
2. Typhoid is caused by a germ which lives in water or milk and on damp vegetables. The germ never flies in the air.
3. Boiling water and cooking food kills this germ.

How to avoid Typhoid:

1. If water reports are bad, boil all drinking water.
2. Heat milk nearly to the boiling point. Keep it there for five minutes.
3. Cook all vegetables before using.
4. Keep your fingers out of your mouth.
5. Wash your hands before eating.
6. Never eat food that has come out of a sick room.
7. Boil all dishes used by a sick person.
8. If you don't know what to do
ASK YOUR WORKS DOCTOR.

HOW TO STAMP OUT TYPHOID

THIS AFFECTS YOU!!

FLIES SPREAD DISEASE

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

It is a well known fact that Flies carry the germs of Typhoid, Tuberculosis, and other diseases. Flies breed in manure and other filth, they gather disease germs whenever they come in contact with them. Do away with the breeding and feeding places and you do away with the flies.

Observe the following Rules

1. Wrap all garbage in paper before putting it in cans, the flies cannot get at it, and the cans are easily kept clean.
2. Provide some support for garbage cans, so that they cannot be upset by stray dogs.
3. Put all manure in well-made boxes with tight fitting covers and remove every three or four days.
4. Kerosene poured on garbage or manure prevents flies from breeding.
5. Screen all windows and doors with well-made and properly-fitting screens and see they are kept in proper repair.
6. Screen all food, especially milk.
7. Purchase your food supplies from stores that screen their provisions and keep their premises clean.
8. Wash fruit and vegetables before using.

It is a duty you owe to yourself, to your neighbors, and to the community to observe these rules; leaving manure, garbage or filth unremoved may be the cause of serious illness to your own, or to your neighbour's family.

Remember, no filth, no flies.

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
CITY OF WINNIPEG**

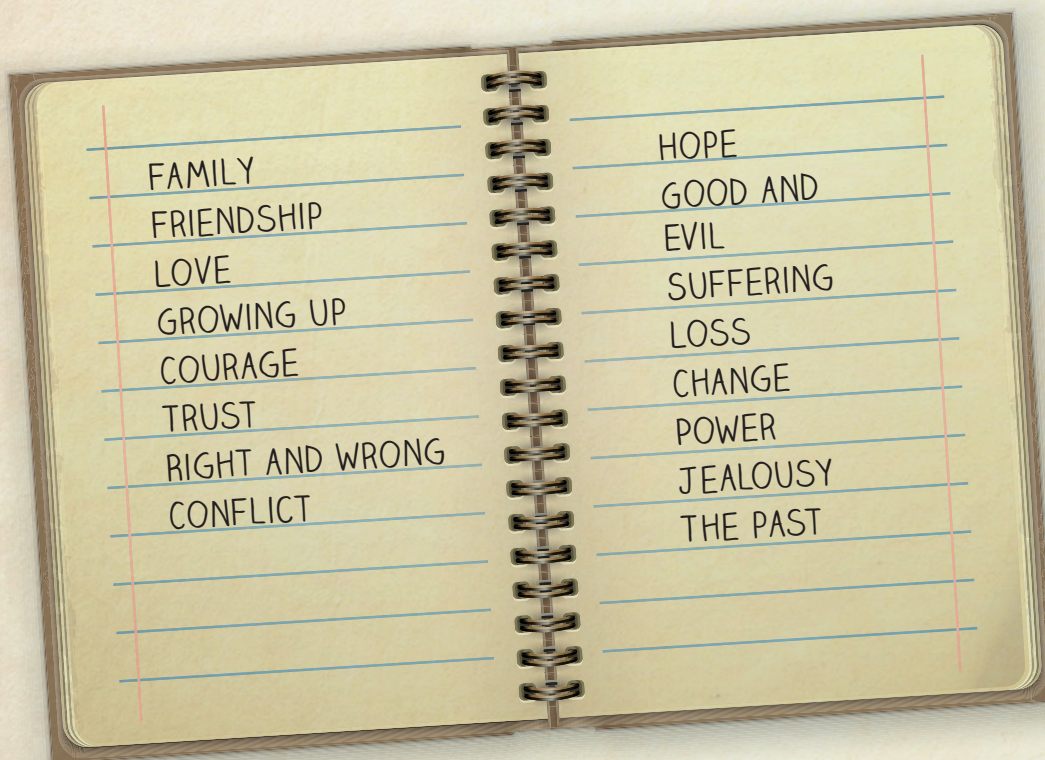
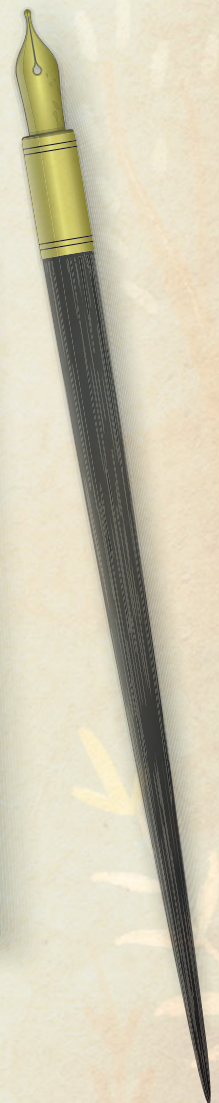
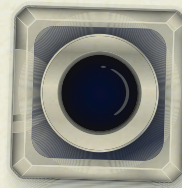
Hygiene Aims to Make Growth More Perfect, Decay Less Rapid, Life More Vigorous, Death More Remote.

CONTEMPORARY THEMES

Themes are 'the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a book.'

Below is a list of some of the themes Sarah touches on in *Through the Mirror Door*.

A number of these themes could be explored in more detail and related to pupils work in PSHE. Pupils could then find examples to illustrate the themes in the book



DURING READING

The story begins: Setting the scene (Chapters 1-4)

Many of the main characters are introduced in the first 4 Chapters so its worthwhile spending time to get familiar with them, particularly the main character, Angela. These Chapters also focus on the events leading up to Angela accompanying her Aunt's family on their visit to France.

Discussion points

Have pupils noticed that the book is written in the first person? What effect does this have on the reader?

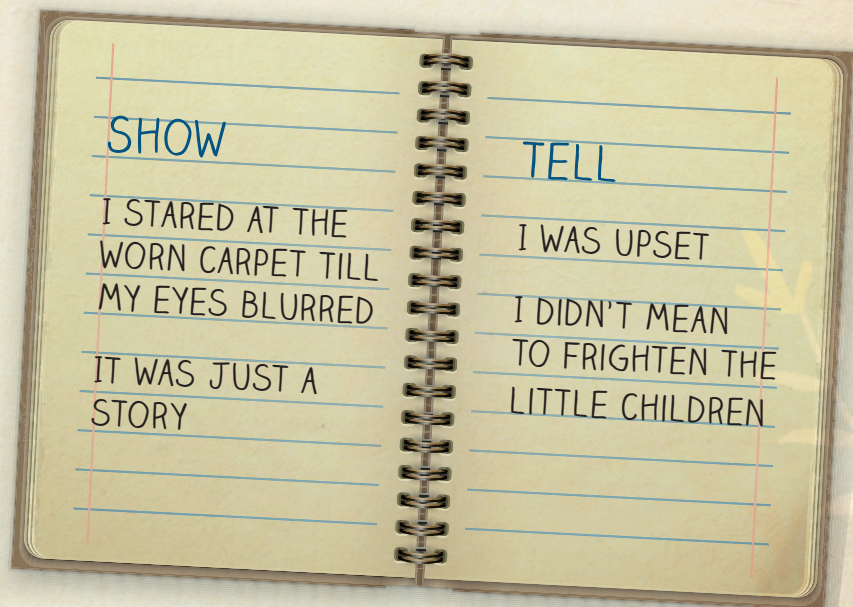
Read the following quote from p3

Mrs Morrison leant forward. 'Your Aunt and Uncle are going to take you on holiday for a few weeks.'

My mouth dropped open.

Ask the pupils how Angela felt about this new plan and discuss why did she felt this way?

Focus pupils' attention on the way Sarah Baker shows (not tells) us about the character of Angela. Display this chart on the board and add further examples. Remind pupils that 'showing not telling' is a feature of good creative writing.



In Chapter 2, Give pupils time to discuss and empathise with Angela's situation- do this sensitively as it is an emotive subject and some children may have personal experiences which they may or may not wish to share.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce Angela's aunt, uncle and cousins to us. Read the Chapters to pupils. Encourage them to notice how Sarah Baker uses actions, appearance, clothes and gestures together with speech to help us get to know the characters. We get an impression of how they feel towards Angela and how Angela feel towards them. Divide the class into 4 groups. Tell each group to create a poster for one of the new characters based on the evidence in Chapter 3. They should organise their poster into sections.

Additional activities

1. Pupils work in pairs act out a short conversation between Mrs Morrison and Angela. Emphasise that they need to capture the characters of Angela and Mrs Morrison.
2. Start a 'role on the wall' display about Angela and add to this throughout the book.
3. At the end of Chapter 4, complete a storyboard for the story so far.
4. Pretend you are Angela. Write a diary entry for your journey to France.

Meeting Herman and Armuth: Chapters 5-7

Read Chapter 5 and stop at this extract on p24.

'Of course, there's only room for two of the girls in the guesthouse.' Armuth nodded to herself then glanced at me. 'There is a spare room here. It has not been used for some time but it will suffice.' She peered at Aunt Cece. 'Herman and I never had many guests so,....'

'Thank you, Armuth, that will be perfect.'

Discuss this conversation with your pupils. Ask them 'How would you feel if this happened to you?'

Now continue reading to the end of Chapter 7.

Activities

1. Based on the descriptions in these Chapters, draw annotated sketches of Herman and Armuth.
2. There is plenty of description of the house in this section of the book. Use this description to create a 'scene in a box' model with outside flaps which open to reveal the hall or kitchen.
3. Chapters 5 to 7 raise lots of questions for Angela. If you were Angela what questions would you be thinking of? This could be presented as a worksheet with a picture of Angela with 'thinking bubbles' round the outside.

Friends or not? Chapters 8-9

Read Chapters 8 and 9 to pupils. These Chapters provide a good opportunity to explore Kitty and Fliss' behaviour towards Angela.

Do pupils think this is bullying? Discuss and give reasons.

Ask pupils to choose either Kitty, Fliss or Angela and write a letter of advice about their behaviour.

Angela also starts to explore the house. Chapter 9 ends with these words:

Suddenly something flickered at the edge of my vision and I turned back to the mirror. I gasped. The mirror was full of flickering light, with twenty, maybe thirty candles all different shapes and sizes. And that wasn't all, because as I stared into it I saw a boy standing right in the middle. For a second we stared at each other. Then he screamed.

Imagine you find the mirror door. Continue the story. What do you find behind the mirror door and why?

Angela meets the boy: Chapters 10-12

Angela meets the boy for the first time. She is worried that he might set himself on fire and is anxious to tell the family. However, their reactions to her news are not what she hoped for. These Chapters provide a good opportunity for pupils to compare and explore the reactions of the characters to Angela's news.

Discussion points

How do Angela and the boy (we haven't been given his name yet) react to each other? What is Angela worried about? What about the boy?

Angela really wants to confide in someone. Why? In your opinion which character would be the most sympathetic? Give your reasons.



Additional Activities

1. Pick 5 quotes about clothes from these Chapters. How do these contribute to the plot and characters in the story?



2. Add more notes to the 'role on the wall' display of Angela and the poster of Aunt Cece based on the information in Chapters 10-12.

3. Matching game. Think of the way the characters (Herman, Armuth, Uncle Vaughn, Aunt Cece, Kitty and Fliss) behave when they are sitting at the dining table having dinner. Write their names then choose a verb and adverb to describe each character's reactions to Angela's conversation (see example below). Use a word bank, dictionary or thesaurus to help you. Cut the pieces of paper out and give these to your partner. Can your partner match the words with the characters?

HERMAN	NOTICED SILENTLY	AUNT CECE	GLARED STRICTLY
ARMUTH	SPOKE SERIOUSLY	KITTY	MOCKED SARCASTICALLY
UNCLE VAUGHN	COMMENTED INDULGENTLY	FLISS	GIGGLED HELPLESSLY

Discoveries: Chapters 13-16

In these Chapters, Angela opts out of going with her Aunt, Uncle and cousins to meet family, preferring to stay at Maison Noyer with Armuth and Herman. This gives her an opportunity to explore further and meet Julien again.

Read Chapter 16 straight through to pupils so that they can appreciate the feeling of suspense and excitement as Angela find the mirror door again and learns more about Julien.

Discussion points

How does Sarah Baker create a tense atmosphere in Chapter 13? Revise the features of creating a tense atmosphere in writing then highlight examples from this Chapter.

Discuss the phrase 'just like my nightmare'. (middle of p75) What does Angela mean by this? Refer back to Angela's nightmare earlier in the book to help pupils answer.

Julien ends their conversation with a threat. (p 76) Describe Angela's reaction to this.

This Chapter contains plenty of vivid descriptions. Read the description of the room on p75. Ask pupils to close their eyes and visualise the scene while you read.

Pupils could draw this scene using the extract to help them. Pupils could then create do classroom gallery activity: leave pictures on tables, walk round the classroom looking at each other's pictures, return to own place and share what they have noticed (positive constructive comments only!)

Herman's reaction when Angela bumps into him (in Chapter 14) is not what she expects. In what ways is Herman kind to Angela? How does he help her? How does Angela's impression of Herman change from the beginning of the Chapter to the end?

Ask pupils to consider what Aunt Cece and Uncle Vaughn's conversation (in Chapter 15) could be about. What makes them think this?

Further activities for Chapters 13-16

1. Write a conversation between Angela and Julien.

Use these examples of writing dialogue from the book to help you remember the key features of writing dialogue.

Remember to punctuate your speech correctly

New speaker new line:

"She'll infect us, Mum," Fliss said.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," I said.

Small letter after speech closes:

"Where were you hiding?" she said.

All punctuation inside speech marks:

"Perhaps your uncle isn't as nice as you think!" I shouted.

Vary the word said:

"Look, I'm sorry," Fliss began, winding her hair round her hand.

Use action to create atmosphere:

"No," I said, taking a step back, clutching the medicines and papers to my chest and, as if it had heard me, the mirror slammed shut between us.

2. Write a short character description of Herman. Remind pupils that they should include details of his appearance, actions and gestures. Remember to use powerful verbs, adverbs and adjectives in your description.

3. Be a Film Director. Think again about the content of Chapter 16.

Imagine the Chapters as if they are in film format. Now imagine you're a film director. Write a set of notes under the headings below to show how this Chapter might be directed.

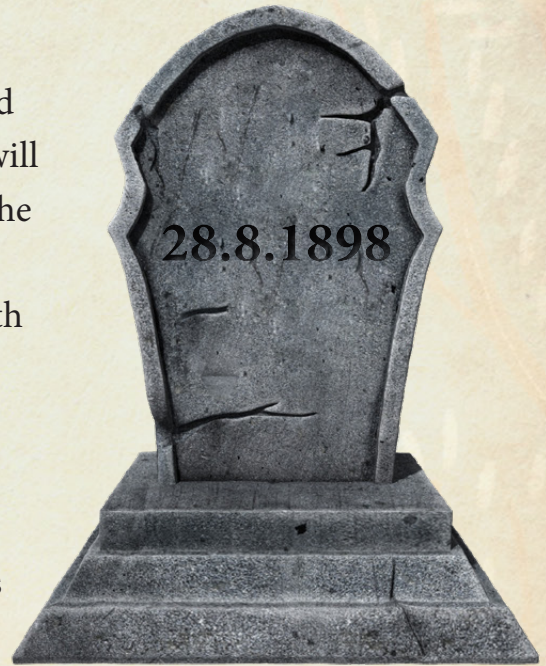
MUSIC - IS THERE ANY? DOES IT CHANGE? SPEED UP/ SLOW DOWN? GET LOUDER OR QUIETER?	
WHAT SORT OF LIGHTING WOULD YOU USE?	
WHAT SORT OF CAMERA ANGLES? WIDE SHOTS? CLOSE UPS?	
WHICH ACTORS AND ACTRESSES WOULD PLAY EACH CHARACTER AND WHY?	
WHAT SORT OF PROPS WOULD YOU INCLUDE?	
ANYTHING ELSE?	

4. Inspiration. These pictures inspired the author when she was writing *Through the Mirror Door*. Write a short story using one of the pictures as inspiration.



The sickness: Chapters 17-24

In these Chapters Angela finds out a lot more about Julien and realises that he lives in 1898. After exploring the garden, she finds his gravestone (dated 28.8.98) and realises that, unless she saves him, he will die tomorrow. She also has a nightmare which gives the reader a much clearer idea of what has happened in her past. Angela has also inadvertently upset Armuth but is not clear why at the moment.



Discussion points

What do the quotes 'Ice dropped down my back' and 'I went cold' (Chapter 17) tell you about Angela's reaction to Julien's revelations? Why is this?

Why does Angela feel that it's important to rescue Julien-give as many reasons as you can. Why won't Julien go with her when she asks him to? Explain your answer.

Why is Herman's present to Angela so important to her?

What clues does Angela's dream (Chapter 21) give us about her past? What is her reaction to it?

Angela seems to get on with Herman much better than Armuth at this point in the book. Why do pupils think this is?

The first 2 paragraphs in Chapter 22 tell the reader about Angela's reaction to upsetting Armuth. Think again about Angela's character- have the pupils had any experience of themselves/other pupils behaving like this?

Discuss the phrase 'I barrelled down the corridor' in Chapter 23. Why is the word 'barrelled' so effective? What picture does it conjure up?

Have pupils noticed that the mirror is getting harder to move each time. Why is this? Summarise this Chapter in 4 sentences.

Activities

1. Start a fact file on Typhoid based on pupils' research and the information about Julian's illness in the book. This could also be used for a wall display.
2. Mirrors feature in many stories. Research the use of mirrors in stories. Can pupils think of other examples of mirrors in stories? Compare and contrast the purpose of the mirror in each story.
3. Create a wall display. Put a line (or strip of tinfoil) down the centre of the display and help pupils to create two pictures either side of the mirror to show the different scenes (and times) on the two sides of the mirror.
4. Hot seating activity- either the teacher or a pupil sits on a chair and pretends to be Julian (use props or clothing to create a sense of realism). Members of the class ask 'Julien' about his life and experiences.

Revelations! Chapters 25-30

The family return with problems of their own. Meanwhile, Angela discovers the history of Maison Noyer with help from Fliss, but she also learns that her Aunt and Uncle are planning something. Finally, Angela makes a startling discovery about Herman!!

Discussion points

Our view of characters changes as we learn more about them and get to know them better. How is Angela's view of Fliss changing and why? Ask pupils to compare this with Kitty's behaviour in Chapter 28.

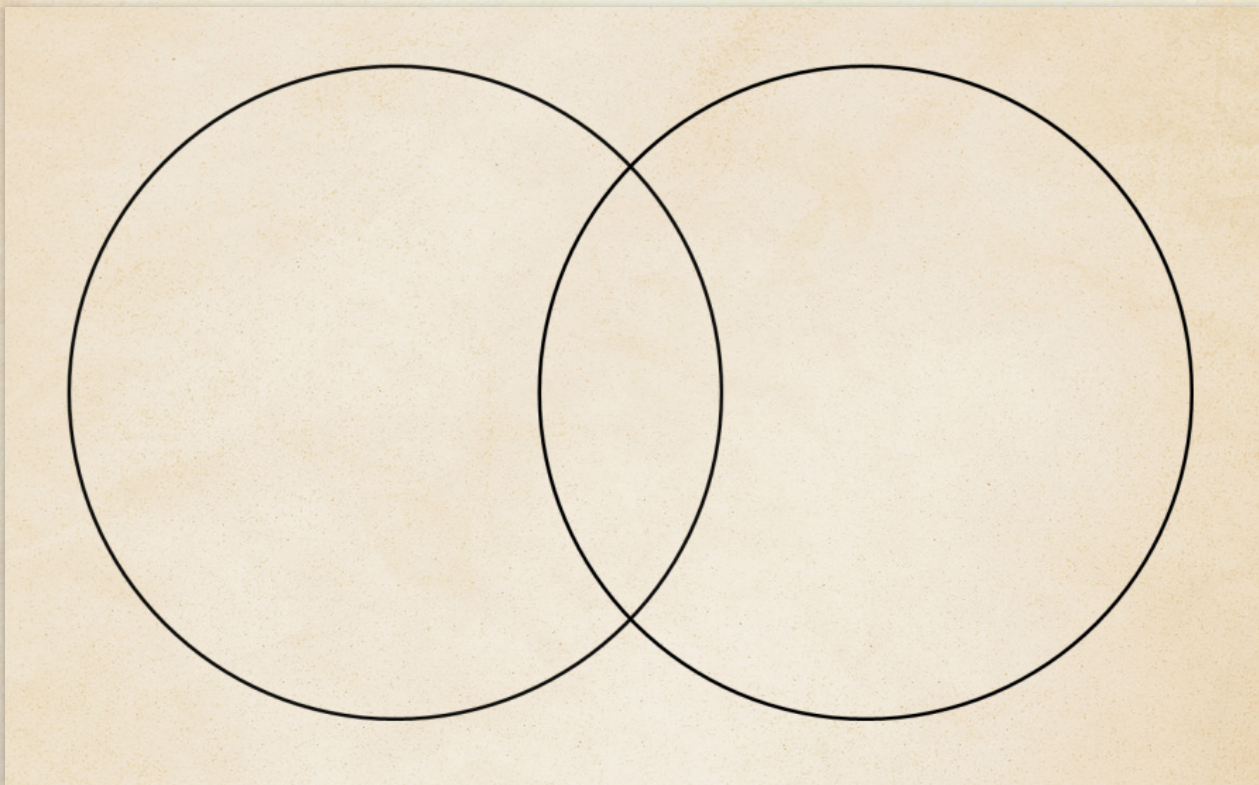
In Chapter 28, Angela upsets Armuth again and is told off by Aunt Cece. Discuss Angela's reaction to this. Why do the pupils think she is feeling so frustrated/angry/aggressive?

In Chapter 30, both Aunt Cece and Angela say no in response to Uncle Vaughn's suggestion that Angela sleeps in the cottage that night. What are both thinking? This could be done as a written activity using thought bubbles.

The last 3 pages of Chapter 30 set a dramatic scene. This provides the backdrop as Angela sees the 9th window, the tower with the missing wing and a face! Text mark the phrases which create this scene.

Additional activities

1. Most stories have 'goodies and baddies' but it's not always easy to tell at the beginning of a story who is who, the characters have to develop, and authors want to keep you guessing. Who do you think are the goodies and baddies in this story so far? Is anyone ever completely good or bad? Can you find some opposite traits in the characters? Are there any characters that you haven't made up your mind about?
2. Clothes are an especially important key to the characters of people in this book. Make a model of Angela and design different sets of clothes for her to wear based on the information in the book.
3. At the start of Chapter 28 Angela analyses Herman's behaviour to identify clues that he is a ghost. Use a Venn diagram to classify Herman's characteristics in the book so far.



4. *"Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too. They live inside us, and sometimes, they win."* — Stephen King

Discuss the quote above. Based on this story, do you think that Sarah Baker believes in ghosts? Give reasons for your answer.

5. In Chapter 27 Angela and Fliss find a newspaper page. Write the article about Nicholas, Julien and the fire. Choose a suitable headline and draw the picture.

6. Write a diary entry for Fliss based on the information in Chapters 25-27

Finding the medicine: Chapters 31-34

Angela manages to avoid Armuth and Aunt Cece and with the help of Herman, finds the medicine.

Chapter 32 – What prompts Angela to have another flashback? What do we learn about Angela in this flashback?

Think about language used to describe Aunt Cece. What picture is this conjuring up about her? Produce a new annotated drawing of Aunt Cece based on the descriptions in Chapter 34. In what ways is this different from the poster made after reading Chapter 3?

Chapter 34 contains a classic chase scene. Highlight the language that makes this exciting. Can pupils think of other examples of chases. (You may have examples that you can show as films. Pupils could produce a short, written description based on a film excerpt.)

Additional Activities

1. Cliff-hangers- look again at the cliff-hangers at the end of Chapters 32, 33 and 34. What is the purpose of these?
2. Produce a cartoon strip using these cliff-hangers to connect the pictures in your cartoon
3. Mime the scene in Chapter 33. Choose suitable atmospheric music to accompany the mime.

Can I save Julien? Chapters 35-39

As Julien's condition worsens and Angela realises she will have to act very quickly to save him, not only from Typhoid but from the villagers who are about to burn the house down. She is helped by Uncle Nicolas who proves not be the villain she thought he was.

Discussion points

Make sure pupils have noticed another 'cliffhanger' at the end of Chapter 35.

Consider how the readers perception of Uncle Nicolas changes from the beginning of Chapter 36 to the end.

Ask pupils 'What 2 significant events happen at the end of Chapter 37?'

Discuss the following quote from Chapter 38.

I'd been running everything over and over in my head. Before, I'd thought Julien had died of Typhoid.

Ask pupils to explain what Angela means by this, referring to parts of the book.

Now read the rest of the Chapter. Remind pupils of the links between Angela's life and Julien's.

Discuss how Angela manages to save Julien and the house. Why was this especially difficult for her?

Additional Activities

1. In Chapter 35 it becomes obvious that Julien is now very ill indeed. Text mark all the words that tell you this. This vocabulary could be put on bricks of a 'vocabulary wall' and added to the Typhoid wall display and then used to produce a piece of descriptive writing about a person who is ill with Typhoid. Make sure that pupils capture the tragedy of the situation and the horror of trying to look after a sufferer in 1898.
2. Refer back to pupils' research on Typhoid and how it would be treated in 1898. Why would the villagers be terrified? Pretend you are the magistrate of the village. Design a 'wanted' poster to put on a nearby tree to help the villagers to catch Julien.

Angela tells the truth: Chapters 40-44

Julien recovers from Typhoid and Angela decides to tell him the truth about her background. Angela finds out exactly what Aunt Cece is up to when Julien translates the papers from French to English. She then has to make the difficult decision about whether to return to her modern life or not.

Why Angela is so insistent that Julien doesn't say anything about the medicine. Bear in mind the attitude to witchcraft at this time. Pupils could also research when antibiotics were discovered. (Alexander Fleming 1928)

Chapter 41 is rather a 'bittersweet' chapter. Ask pupils what does this mean? Do they agree and why?

Discuss with pupils Angela's reasons for deciding to tell Julien the truth. Refer back to the lies she told him on page 74 (Chapter 13) and use this for comparison.

Discuss why is Angela so upset about what has happened to her. (Chapter 42) Be aware that this may be a sensitive subject for some pupils but it could be an opportunity to highlight the benefits of talking to someone if you are really upset. Discuss who pupils could go to in order to get help.

Ask pupils about Julien's reaction to Angela's story. Is it different to the reaction Angela expected? In what way? How did Angela feel after she told the truth to Julien?

Additional activities

1. Pretend you are Julien. Plan and write a letter to Angela to persuade her to stay with you in 1898.
2. Consider all of Angela's reasons for staying with Julien versus going back through the mirror to her modern life. Use these to set up a decision alley. Take turns to be Angela walking through the alley. What would individual pupils decide to do and why?

Changes and the future: Chapters 45-50

Having made her decision, Angela returns to the present day and finds that many changes have already taken place. Finally, she gets a home and future that makes her happy.

Discussion points

In Chapter 45, Armuth isn't behaving as Angela expects her to. Ask pupils to take a guess at why this might be and give reasons.

Draw pupils' attention to the reference (in Chapter 46) to Kaa from *The Jungle Book*. What do pupils know about Kaa? (They may need to find out.)

Find a quote from the Chapter 47 which sums up the reaction of each character (Aunt Cece, Uncle Vaughn, Kitty, Fliss, and Angela) to Armuth's story.

Draw pupil's attention to the quote at the end of the Chapter.

'So I did the next best thing I ran away.'

Have they noticed that Angela is resorting to her previous behaviour? Why might this be? Ask pupils to watch out for how Angela's behaviour changes at the end of Chapter 48.

Ask pupils to explain this quote from Chapter 48:

'a smile made its way to my lips and quiet tears salted my face.'

After reading Chapter 49 remind pupils that authors like to include unexpected twists in their stories. Discuss with them why Sarah Baker has included the last paragraph of this chapter.

AFTER READING

Suitable prompts for a whole book discussion/review:

1. Who is the most important or interesting character and why?
2. Which character would you choose as a friend and why?
3. What is the setting? Why is it important to the story?
4. What new or interesting words have you found?
5. Discuss why the title is a good choice or not. Can you think of a possible alternative title?
6. What type of person would enjoy this book and why?
7. Finish this sentence: This book reminds me of..... because.....
8. Think of 3 'feelings' words and 3 'settings' words (scary, exciting, creepy etc.) to describe the book.
9. Compare/contrast 2 characters in the book.
10. What 3 questions about the book would you ask Sarah Baker if you could?

Additional activities

1. Re read the description of the walnut grove in Chapter 44. Describe the changes that have taken place since Julien recovered. Read the note on walnuts at the end of the story. Pupils could then undertake a scanning exercise to locate other references to walnuts in the book.
2. The book ends with Angela planning to return to the house. She has seen the tapestry move.

That's when I saw something move. Out of the corner of my eye one of the large tapestries ruffled in the breeze, except I couldn't feel a breeze. I looked closer and the whole tapestry rippled. I could hear whispering. The embroidered lady in a hooped skirt and the man in a top hat standing next to a carriage quivered and in the dark space behind, one of the wall panels began to slide open.

Imagine Angela returns. What's behind the tapestry? Where does Angela travel this time? Continue the story.

3. Imagine you are a reporter working on a news story. Choose a character from the book to interview then write up your story. Remember to think of a catchy headline and use quotes. Remember to think about your readership.

4. Imagine that Angela returns to Maison Noyer with a gift for Amruth. Think carefully about what you should buy.

5. Aunt Cece is really the villain of this story. Compare her with other female 'villians' from stories e.g. Cruella De Vil (101 Dalmatians), The Witch (Snow White) etc.

